



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** ★★ ★

National Point in Time Count of People Experiencing Homeless

Volunteers and service providers will join efforts in January 2014 to participate in the National Point in Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness. The Count is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for communities across the country to receive funding. During the last 10 days of January 2014, thousands of volunteers are needed to canvass communities, as well as count and survey individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Service providers nationwide will choose one day during the 10-day period to count people in their communities who are living on the street and in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or domestic violence shelters.

The Point in Time Count is intended to provide a snapshot of a community's homeless population. The Point in Time Count is one way to collectively understand the scope and breadth of homelessness in our nation and our individual communities. The count is an important effort to make sure the voices of people experiencing homelessness in your community are heard and efforts are made to provide appropriate services. It also helps communities develop more effective plans and measure progress toward ending homelessness.

Below are five key steps to joining other enthusiastic community members in a commitment to end homelessness.

1. Identify a Location

Identify the groups that are conducting the Point in Time Count in your state. To volunteer to participate in counting or to help organize a count in your community, contact your [city's primary Continuum of Care coordinator](#). Continuum of Care is the HUD program that assists individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The coordinator will be able to let you know the most pressing needs for completing the count process.

2. Organize a Team to Plan

In coordination with the Continuum of Care coordinator, help recruit an informed team to plan and implement the event. A successful group effort requires a motivated team that agrees upon clearly defined tasks, sets reachable goals, and acts with inspiration and purpose.

- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- In collaboration with the [Continuum of Care coordinator](#), tasks might include:
 - Gather information on the specifics of volunteer sign-up in your state.
 - Recruit volunteers to assist with the Count through flyers in libraries, schools, places of worship, community centers, or grocery stores. Also consider radio announcements, social media, and word

of mouth to let people know when and where and when the Count will take place.

- Conduct trainings with volunteers to explain the purpose of the Count and review expectations, tasks and safety considerations.
- Host donation drives prior to the Count to collect much needed items to hand out such as socks, travel size hygiene products and pre-packaged snacks.
- Identify the supplies that you will need for the Count. Include refreshments.
- Determine if anyone will require accommodations to participate. Will you need a sign language interpreter?
- Order or print materials to provide information on available services to help end homelessness. Does the Continuum of Care or other service agencies in your community have materials to share? Will you need materials in languages other than English?
- Coordinate your activities with those of the Point in Time Headquarters and other groups or organizations participating in the Count. More information on local efforts can be found at the [Homelessness Resource Exchange](#).
- Learn about the [national results of the most recent Point-in-Time count](#) at the HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development [website](#).
- [Post your project](#) on [our site](#) so that people in your area can join your efforts as volunteers.

3. Implement Your Service Project/Activity

On the day of your volunteer training:

- Make sure project leaders or coordinators are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers as they arrive.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the Count: raising awareness of homelessness and poverty and exploring ways to combat these issues in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Train volunteers in how to conduct the Count, reviewing any specifications or guidelines established by HUD.
- Review any materials volunteers will be handing out during the Count, such as information on service agencies to ensure volunteers are prepared to answer questions.
- Provide guidance to volunteers on expectations, tasks, and safety issues to consider during the Count.
- Organize volunteers into different work teams for the days of the Count. For example, designate people to greet volunteers prior to going out for the Count, hand out refreshments, respond to questions, assist at the Point in Time Headquarters, or distribute materials.

On the days of the Count:

- Prior to volunteers setting out to conduct the Count, or support the Count in ways the Continuum of Care coordinator has identified, gather everyone together to answer any last-minute questions, and ensure everyone understands their roles and has all the supplies they will need.
- Make sure that volunteers have the supplies they need -- for example: maps of the designated areas where they will be counting and are aware of the boundaries of their Count area.
- Conduct the Count or other project. Consider having a team captain with each set of volunteers, who will offer continuous encouragement to volunteers.

- Make time for reflection with volunteers throughout the days of the Count. Talk about the parallels and differences between your effort to raise awareness of poverty in your community and the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that encourage everyone to live up to the purpose and potential of America.

4. Reflect and Assess

After the event, take some time to reflect with your partners on how it went. Think about what went well and what could be improved.

- Host an official debrief meeting with your team members after the event.
- Evaluate the goals that you set for the event and consider which you met, exceeded, and didn't quite reach.
- Who did the event impact? What did you accomplish? What were your impressions of the day?
- Ask everyone for their honest assessment of what went well and how to improve it for next time.
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Make a list and plan for necessary follow-up.

5. Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize a Point in Time Count project with their local Continuum of Care coordinator next year once they hear what you accomplished. [Share your service story](#). We're listening and want to know what you did.